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Introduction to 2018 special issue of *European Security*: "ontological (in)security in the European Union"

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ABSTRACT

The European Union (EU) faces many crises and risks to its security and existence. While few of them threaten the lives of EU citizens, they all create a sense of anxiety and insecurity about the future for many ordinary Europeans. Amongst these crises are the more obvious challenges of sovereign debt and fiscal austerity; refugees from conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria; and the rise of populist far-right parties across Europe. But behind these challenges lie less visible insecurities about economic prospects, social wellbeing, and a widespread expectation that the EU is unable to answer the challenges of twenty-first century global politics. In other words, the greatest security challenge facing people across Europe is not physical, despite the threats of Putin and ISIS, but is a sense of fear and anxiety over their daily lives.

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The European Union (EU) faces many crises and risks to its security and existence. While few of them threaten the lives of EU citizens, they all create a sense of anxiety and insecurity about the future for many ordinary Europeans. Amongst these crises are the more obvious challenges of sovereign debt and fiscal austerity; refugees from conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria; the rise of populist far-right parties across Europe; as well as the uncertainty of a possibly disintegrating European Union (EU) as a result of the "Brexit" process. But behind these challenges lie less visible insecurities about economic prospects, social wellbeing, and a widespread expectation that the EU is unable to answer the challenges of twenty-first century global politics. In other words, the greatest security challenge facing people across Europe is not physical, despite the threats of Putin and ISIS, but a sense of fear and anxiety that seems to permeate everyday lives of many European citizens and denizens. Scholars of European security struggle to explain the linkages between the relatively low physical risks to contemporary EU citizens and the sky-high feelings of fear, anxiety, and threat felt by European populations. Similarly, scholars of the European Union have been largely unable to move beyond a focus on institutional, legal, and policy challenges to the Union to account for pressures from anxious and fearful individuals and groups in search of existential answers to their real and imagined predicaments as shown in recent opinion polls.

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Taken together with other surveys of European fears and anxieties (Borger *et al.* 2015, Unisys 2017), the EU's Eurobarometer public opinion polling demonstrates the extent to which Europeans have confirmed such quandaries over the past decade. Here we notice a shift in regards to personal insecurities and anxieties in which personal fears were primarily socio-economic following the global financial crisis in 2007 and the peak of the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis in 2012. Likewise, unemployment remained a primary fear at personal, member state, and EU levels during 2009–2014 while, in contrast, both member state and EU level fears were focused on immigration and terrorism from 2014 onwards. There are clear differences at the state level, with countries within the Eurozone, such as Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands having a central focus on economic fears, while those countries involved in international conflict and enduring terrorist threats, such as the UK and France, express greater fears over terrorism (see Eurobarometer 88, Autumn 2017, QA3-5).

Figures such as these can provide some indications of the current concerns that preoccupy many Europeans but they are less helpful for understanding the underlying motivations for such apprehensions. This is where research on ontological security, or perhaps more accurately, ontological *in*security, provides a much-needed account of the principal dynamics behind the emotional underpinnings of increased anxieties and fears among the European populace. An ontological security approach provides leverage for understanding how fears and anxieties at group, state, and EU level have psycho-socio-political effects that shape political movements, policy debates, and European security.

It is now more than a decade since the concept of "ontological security" was introduced into International Relations (IR) in order to better understand the "security of being" (a concept discussed below) found in feelings of fear, anxiety, crisis, and threat to wellbeing (Kinnvall 2004a, 2006, Steele 2005, 2008, Mitzen 2006a, 2006b, 2016, Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking 2009). However, a real question must be raised over why the study of ontological security has ***not*** been used collectively to understand the most profound challenges to security within the EU outlined above (for exceptions see: Manners 2002, 2013a).

With its origins in the psychoanalysis of Ronald Laing in *Self and Others* (Laing 1960) and the sociology of Anthony Giddens in *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Giddens 1991), an ontological security perspective highlights the need actors believe they have to feel as if they have stable identities. It draws analytic attention to biographical narratives, and to routinised and home-making practices as the modes for constructing and sustaining ontological security, helping us to see how those practices shape political possibilities and outcomes. A number of scholars have examined ontological security in Europe, including work on the EU (Manners 2002, 2013a), state diplomacy (Mitzen 2006a, 2006b, 2016) peace studies (Roe 2008), security communities (Adler and Greve 2009, Browning and Joenniemi 2013, Browning 2018a), and on political psychology and migration (Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking 2011). What all of these studies show is that the analytical prism an ontological security perspective provides sheds distinctive light on European security and insecurity.

However, more important from our perspective is that a focus on ontological security brings to the fore the many contentions involved in European insecurities, such as those between individuals and their respective states; between state leaders, their populations and the European Union; and between the European Union and the world. A focus on ontological security and insecurity is attentive first and foremost to the often-ignored affective relations between these loosely aligned units of analysis. It talks about the

difficulties experienced by many citizens and denizens in Europe in terms of access to resources and services, but also of the traumatisation, despair, uncertainty, and alienation many of them experience in terms of opportunities for social participation in the light of austerity policies, migration discourses, and populist politics. However, it also raises questions around collective "bodies", such as European states and the European Union, and the extent to which they can feel and experience harm, alienation, threat, and despair (as well as hope, joy and happiness). In the case of the EU it raises questions about its presumed role as a security provider, a security community, and/or a peace project onto which various myths, symbols, and imaginations are being projected (Manners 2010, 2013b). As the various articles in this special issue show, such "bodies" always exist as continuous works in progress involving a complex web of narrative imagination, perceived realities, and shared beliefs about the ordering of claims for unification and recognition, making the move between levels of analysis as outlined in much ontological security work an important catalyst for grasping collective emotions and their effects.

Psycho-, socio-, politico- ontological security

The 60-year old concept of ontological security has its origins in psychoanalysis, sociology, and political psychology; any understanding or application of the concept thus needs to take seriously these three psycho-, socio-, politico- elements. Writing in 1950 the psychoanalysist Erik Erikson argued that societies create the conditions for human growth through security, identity, and integrity:

> In this book we suggest that, to understand either childhood or society, we must expand our scope to include the study of the way in which societies lighten the inescapable conflicts of childhood with a promise of some security, identity, and integrity. In thus reinforcing the values by which the ego exists societies create the only condition under which human growth is possible. (Erikson 1950, p. 251)

Drawing on the introduction of the terms "ontological security" and "ontological insecurity" by the literary critic Trilling (1955), the psychoanalyst Ronald Laing argued that ontological security occurs when there is an absence of "anxieties and dangers" where "identity and autonomy are never in danger" (Laing 1960, p. 39 and 41). In contrast Laing argued that ontological insecurity arises "with the consequent attempts to deal with … anxieties and dangers" where "identity and autonomy are always in question" (Laing 1960, p. 39 and 42). The condition of ontological security is closely associated with the "depressive position" of Klein (1975), which constructs self and other by accepting complexity without resorting to splitting and projection, while the condition of ontological insecurity is more closely associated with the Kleinian "paranoid-schizoid position" with psychic processes of "splitting and projection in which, in order to defend against anxiety, self and other are split into wholly good and thoroughly bad" (Cash 1993, pp. 107–110, 2009, pp. 95–96).

While the study of ontological insecurity was primarily within the fields of literature and psychoanalysis in the 1960s and 1970s, the concept slowly made its way into the field of sociology (Gibbon 1972, Kanter 1974, Heyman and Shaw 1978). In the 1980s and 1990s the work of Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck was important in bringing together the concept of ontological security with the study of risk society (Beck *et al.* 1994). For Giddens, ontological security refers to a person's elemental sense of safety in the world where trust of

other people is like an emotional inoculation against existential anxieties: "a protection against future threat and dangers which allows the individual to sustain hope and courage in the face of whatever debilitating circumstances she or he might later confront" (Giddens 1991, pp. 38–39 in Kinnvall 2002, p. 102). Similarly for Beck,

> This all-encompassing and all-permeating insecurity is not just the dark side of freedom. What is important instead is to discover it as the bright side. The introduction of insecurity into our thought and deeds may help to achieve the reduction of objectives, slowness, revisability and ability to learn, the care, consideration, tolerance and irony that are necessary for the change to a new modernity. (Beck 1997, p. 168 in Cash 2009, p. 97)

In parallel to the sociological field was the work on ontological security within the field of political psychology (Renshon 1976, Diamond 1985). John Cash brought together psychoanalysis with the structuration of ideology to argue that, "Our 'basic security system' ([Giddens'] substitute term for the unconscious) has to be intact. Routinely it is intact and, as such, it guarantees our ontological security, an ontological security which critical situations disrupt" (Cash 1993, p. 82, 1996, p. 57). Cash went further to argue that

> political conflict … endemically involves challenges to the ontological security of the subject and thus engages the complex field of thought, emotion and interest. In the popular phrase ideological conflict is always 'a battle for the hearts and minds' of subjects, or, as Gramsci would have it, for intellectual and moral, as well as political, hegemony. (Cash 1993, p. 104, 1996, p. 72)

Similarly, Catarina Kinnvall drew on Erikson, Giddens and Julia Kristeva to focus on the "sociopsychological aspects of category formation and the essentialization of the 'other'" where ontological security and existential anxiety are used for "understanding the global-local nexus as psychologised discourses of domination and resistance" (Kinnvall 2002, p. 80, 2004a, p. 747, 2004b).

This theme was recently developed in Cash and Kinnvall's (2017) discussion of ontological security and postcolonial borders in which they argue that the search for ontological security is intimately connected to a "national fantasy" in which imaginations of borders as bounded space often hinges on an obsession with the limits of sovereignty. "To reclaim control over this lost sovereignty and fulfil the national fantasy of homogeneity tends to involve diffuse attempts at governing securities, identities and histories" (Cash and Kinnvall 2017, p. 269). Here, the emphasis is on the indeterminate nature of ontological security as a need that actors believe they have in order for them to experience a notion of wholeness and mastery of self. Here desires and imaginations of what Lacan (1978) has referred to as *master signifiers* of "the nation", "the people" and "the other" act in ways that secure an illusion of a "stable self" and an "equally stable other".

These bodies of research have impacted on much International Relations (IR) theory focused on ontological security and the state. In this regard, ontological security has either been conceptualised in line with Giddens' intersubjective notion of self where states, like individuals, are concerned with maintaining a consistent notion of self to enhance their ontological security in relations with other states – the exogenous approach (Mitzen 2006a, 2006b, Zarakol 2010), or the emphasis has been on the state as a provider of ontological security for its citizens – the intra-subjective or endogenous approach (Steele 2005, 2008, 2010, Krolikowski 2008), in which state representatives are able to tell convincing stories about the self through autobiographical narratives (see also

Subotic 2016). Here, the main inclination has been to problematise realist and liberal notions of security concerned with security dilemmas and physical security by focusing on "security-of-being" rather than "security-as-survival". As noted by a number of scholars in this tradition, a rigid attachment to a monolithic identity narrative is only one possibility, however, and a dangerous one at that (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2017, Steele 2008).

Narratives and discourse have also been the topic of what Ejdus (2017, 2018) has denoted as the "material turn" in IR ontological security studies. This refers to the ways in which narrative imaginations are tied up with what Giddens has signified as "a sense of place" which, Ejdus argues, "is an important source of ontological security because it provides / … / 'a psychological tie between the biography of the individual and the locales that are the settings of the time–space paths through which that individual moves'" (Giddens 1984, p. 367, in Ejdus 2017, p. 3). Places, spaces and narratives about certain locales are thus said to offer important imagined anchors for political leaders invested in attempts to address and pin down unknown anxieties of what the future holds (see Subotic 2018, Della Sala 2018). This line of reasoning is similar to how Mitzen (forthcoming) and others (see Kinnvall 2006, Noble 2006, Ejdus 2017, 2018) have conceptualised home as a possible place of belonging that provides a sense of constancy of environment by offering a space in which the routines of existence can be performed, but also a set of meanings that demonstrate important elements of making oneself "at home" that may create homelessness for others (see Browning 2018b). Here, narratives of past practices, memories and symbols become emotional, embodied and material representations to which individuals and groups attach a sense of self and purpose, but also tools for elites to create borders and boundaries around constructions of collective identities (Cash and Kinnvall 2017). This focus on the narrative construction of ontological security can be related to some recent studies of EU narratives and the mythology of the EU in world politics where "the mythology of global Europa is part of our everyday existence, part of the EU in and of the world" (Manners 2010, pp. 67–68: see also Manners and Murray 2016).

While some have argued that the research field on ontological security has opened up for the scrutiny of not only the multitudes of fears and insecurities that lay at heart of identity politics and conflict (e.g. Kinnvall 2004a, 2006, Croft 2012a, 2012b, Chernobrov 2016), as well as of the entire research field on statecraft, security issues, and diplomacy questioning realist, liberal and even constructivist theories of state agency and security (e.g. Mitzen 2006a, 2006b, Steele 2008, Rumelili 2015a, 2015b, Flockhart 2016), others have maintained that claims of ontological security foreclose important spaces of resistance, alterity, and ethical deliberations (Rossdale 2015, Browning 2016) or that research on ontological security conceptualises identity as singular and largely consistent patterns of behaviour (Lebow 2016). In response to such critique we maintain that any focus on ontological securities and insecurities proceeds from a view of identity and identifications as a process of becoming rather than being. However, the emotional aspects of feeling insecure can be very threatening and the imagination of homogenous identities can be immensely powerful. Much recent literature has also focused on how dominant narratives of ontological security can be challenged, destabilised and ruptured and how violent cartographies of homogeneity and sovereignty may ultimately fail as "they are internally contradictory, beset by gaps and 'haunted by the "unruly" elements and histories they seek to exclude'" (Edenborg 2017, p. 297, see also Solomon 2015).

This review of the development of the concept of ontological security provides a reminder that it contains psychoanalytical, sociological, and political elements which are critical for understanding the contemporary European Union. The authors in this special issue makes use of this literature to explore how narratives of European integration have been part of public discourse in the post-war period and how reconciliation dynamics, national biographical narratives and memory politics have been enacted to create ontological security. It has also been used to understand the anxiety of the "remainers" in the Brexit referendum and the consequences of its failure to address the ontological anxieties and insecurities of remain voters. As a body of literature, it has further been drawn upon to analyse how European security firms market ontological security through various mechanisms and has resulted in an ontological security-inspired reading of the EU and NATO's engagement with hybrid threats and with EU as an anxious community.

Why ontological security to study the European Union?

Ontological security is a particularly promising approach to the study of the EU, and, more specifically, of the nexus of EU institutionalisation, identity constructions and (in)security. Of course, it is not the only perspective one might take. Critical social theory has slowly made its way into scholarship on this nexus over the past three decades, including post-structural securitisation theory, constructivist social identity theory, and Bourdieusian critical theory that have grown in and around the European intellectual milieu (Manners 2002, 2013a). Poststructural work on securitisation and de-securitisation in Europe includes European integration and national identity (Hansen and Waever 2001), migration and asylum in the EU (Huysmans 2006), and terrorism and intelligence (Kaunert and Léonard 2013), and has many overlaps with the study of ontological security. However, working from poststructural discourse analysis, this work does not always adequately account for the non-discursive norms and practises, habits and routines which provide the ontological foundations of security. Similarly, constructivist social identity theory examines European security governance (Krahmann 2003), security and community (Kelstrup and Williams 2006), and the identity challenges of European integration (Rumelili 2015a), all covering similar areas to ontological security. However, constructivist scholarship can sometimes be too closely associated with the positivist political agenda raising questions about objective vs. subjective senses of (in)security. Finally, Bourdieusian critical theory and practice theory of scholarship on sovereignty and European integration (Adler-Nissen 2015), and European security as informal practice (Græger 2017) also share ground on the importance of routine and habits in ontological security. However, the practice approach can sometimes suffer from similar problems regarding the interpretation of culture in ethnographic analysis. Thus, the study of ontological (in)security in the EU has many possible overlaps with critical social theory in the study of the EU, which the contributors demonstrate throughout; but it provides a more holistic view of security than can be found in much critical security research.

Using ontological security to study the European Union allows for a more psychosocial understanding of security, a more nuanced use of critical approaches to the EU, to the EU member states, and to group security, and provides greater space for the study of contemporary EU crises. Firstly, as discussed above, the combination of psycho-, socio-, and politico- bodies of research on security allows for a more psychosocial understanding of

security than existing critical security perspectives such as poststructural, constructivist, and practice theory do. One of the great weaknesses of EU studies is the extent to which it is largely tied to institutional, legal, and policy analyses, rather than taking account of the anxiety and insecurity which fuel current political changes that in turn challenge the EU. In this respect ontological security represents a far more well-rounded approach to crises, anxieties, and insecurities in the EU than existing approaches.

Secondly, as discussed in the next section, an ontological security approach provides a more nuanced account of the relationships between personal/group security, member state security, and EU-wide security. While helpful in their own ways, poststructural, constructivist, and practice approaches tend to fall into the IR trap of thinking about the EU as either a group of states or as an emergent (con)federal state. As will be explored next, theorising ontological (in)security in the EU helps escape this trap by moving beyond state-centric thinking and towards an approach that embraces not just local, state, and supranational "levels" but also social, economic, and political (in)securities.

Thirdly, if ontological security refers as much to the sociopsychological power dynamics of domination and resistance as it does to conflict and cooperation, then it is pertinent that we explore these dynamics in an EU-setting infused with insecurities and tensions between and within member states as well as in relation to global politics as such.

Fourth, and finally, using ontological security provides much greater space for the study of contemporary EU crises because it takes a more holistic view of security than much critical security research. The main basis of this claim is that ontological security takes an anti-foundational view of self, other and identity – one that takes into account both collective unconscious processes as well as creative collective resistance. In this respect, "all security is ontological" because it is impossible to separate ways of seeing the world from a sense of well-being in the world (Kinnvall and Mitzen 2018).

Theorising ontological (in)security in the European Union

Building on these developments, the concept of ontological security has been used in three distinct ways to theorise and understand European integration and the European Union where European integration is understood as "the economic, social and political processes of mutual accommodation and inclusion by European states and peoples" (Manners 2014, p. 292). The first approach to ontological security is in the analysis of the EU as an institutional whole found in its consideration as a "European [security] Union" (Manners 2002, 2013a). From this first perspective, ontological security is "important because although the existential security of referent subjects/objects may be achieved, the forces of liberalisation and modernisation [may] produce social and economic dislocation as well as personal uncertainty and insecurity" which could threaten ontological security thereby motivating violence and conflict (Manners 2002, pp. 13–14; see also Manners 2006). In the 1990s, the use of ontological security in the EU drew our attention towards the evidence demonstrated by the autumn 2000 Eurobarometer public opinion survey that Europeans showed greatest concern for EU policies that address unemployment, drugs and crime, poverty, environment, consumer protection, and human rights; all issues that challenge respondents' sense of ontological security (Manners 2002, p. 7 and 31). But equally important, and partially contradictory, is the way in which the EU is "represented as a threat to ontological security … in the lives of Europeans and non-Europeans" (Manners 2002, pp. 3–4). Similarly,

since 2003 existential and ontological concerns have increasingly co-existed alongside each other in the discourses of the EU's external actions, for example in the European Commission's 2003 strategy on *The EU and the UN: The Choice of Multilateralism*, the *European Security Strategy* (European Commission 2003, Solana 2003, 2008), and the *Global Security Strategy* (EEAS 2016, see also Mälksoo 2016). These four examples illustrate the discursive construction of EU existential and ontological security concerns lying at the nexus of development and security policies (Manners 2013a, p. 412–415).

The second approach to ontological security is to focus on the member states of the EU and the "routinizing relations" between them (Mitzen 2006a, 2006b). From this second perspective, EU member states "seek ontological security through routinising relations with their primary strategic partners" (Mitzen 2006a, pp. 271). This observation is crucial for EU ontological security because

> Europe's ability to overcome its conflictual past and develop an identity which does not depend on 'discourses of danger' is linked to its consultation reflex and other practices through which member states publicly reaffirm and perform their identity as security-seekers to one another. (Mitzen 2006b, p. 363)

Thus, the collective aspirational identities of the EU in global politics is constituted by "intra-European routines of multilateral security cooperation" and that "through these routines, EU member states enact their collective identity and recognise it in one another, keeping it salient even for external action" (Mitzen 2006a, p. 272).

The third approach to ontological security in the EU is through the study of social groups within, without, and across the boundaries of Europe, in particular by focusing on religious, nationalist and minority identity groups (Kinnvall 2002, 2004a, 2012, Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking 2011). Kinnvall analyses the ways in which the forces of globalisation and postcolonialism facilitate rapid social transformation and change which increase dislocation and uncertainty for many minority and majority groups in Europe (Kinnvall 2002, p. 80). A common reaction to such dislocation and uncertainty is to seek reaffirmation of one's self-identity by drawing closer to any collective that is able to reduce uncertainty and anxiety in order to address ontological insecurity. The result of this process is attempts to "securitise subjectivity in an intensified search for one stable identity (regardless of its actual existence)" (Kinnvall 2004b, p. 249). The culmination of globalisation, postcolonialism in Europe, post-11th September terrorism, migration, and economic crises have all contributed to the securitisation of subjectivity by populist neo-racists, anti-EU xenophobes, white class groups, as well as vulnerable minority race and religious groups in Europe (Kinnvall 2015, 2016).

These approaches of EU institutional, member states, and social groups provide three distinct ways of analysing and understanding ontological (in)security in the European Union. The next section discusses the contributions to the special issue and their variety of uses of ontological security in relations to different academic fields, analytical approaches, and focus within, across, and outside of the EU.

Special issue contributions

In terms of contributors and contributions, the authors are able to bring a series of unique perspectives on ontological (in)security in the European Union. The contributions can be

viewed through three different perspectives in terms of (i) their relationships to the fields of psychoanalysis, sociology, and political psychology/IR; (ii) their empirical focus of EU institutions, EU member states, and social groups; (iii) their analysis on ontological (in)security within the EU, across the EU's borders, or of the EU in global politics.

In his contribution, *Vincent Della Sala* demonstrates how ontological security is necessary for analysing the role of narratives of European integration in the success or failure of the European security community. Identifying the narratives that social actors tell and use can provide us with some insight into how they have understood the world around them, when and how they should act and why. Narratives can serve to provide ontological security for a political community, that is, practices, routines and narratives help define who belongs to it and why it remains a political community. Ontological security refers to a sense of confidence of one's identity rooted in habits and routines (Giddens 1991, p. 98), as well as in the stability of the surrounding environment that defines an identity. Narratives can provide this confidence in that they have a number of elements that can establish cognitive and normative maps to make sense of the world. They sequence events and the environment so that social actors can make choices in the face of uncertainty, rooted in the familiar and the understandable. Here *Della Sala* explores different narratives of European integration that have been part of public discourse in the post-war period and the extent to which they have contributed to ontological (in)security, focussing on narratives that have been crafted about the EU's foundation, about territory and borders, and about its exceptionalism. Hence, the article contributes to the growing literature on ontological security by examining the extent to which narratives play a role, identifying which narratives may be successful and under which conditions.

Bahar Rumelili then argues that the European Union is widely credited for consolidating a democratic "security community" in Europe and bringing about a definitive break with war-torn and authoritarian/totalitarian pasts in many European countries. Drawing on recent discussions in ontological security studies, *Rumelili's* article points out that these radical breaks may have come at the expense of ontological insecurity at the societal and individual levels in Europe. While conventional teleological narratives often treat reconciliation and breaking with the past as automatic by-products of European integration, ontological security theory calls for greater attention to the societal tensions and anxieties triggered by these transformations and how they are being managed – more or less successfully – through reconciliation dynamics and memory politics in different societal settings. The article draws comparative theoretical and empirical insights from case-specific literatures on reconciliation and memory politics in Europe to develop an ontological security perspective on European integration (Rumelili 2018).

Jelena Subotic similarly focuses on how Holocaust remembrance in post-Communist Europe has become a source of ontological insecurity driving the rise of the far-right and destabilising both Eastern European states and the EU. Her contribution explores ways in which states make strategic use of political memory in an effort to resolve their contemporary ontological insecurities. Looking at this question through the lens of contemporary Holocaust remembrance in post-communist Europe, the principal argument is that post-communist states today are dealing with conflicting sources of ontological insecurity. They are anxious to be perceived as fully European by "core" European states, which means sharing in the cosmopolitan European narratives of the twentieth century, perhaps the strongest being the narrative of the Holocaust. They are also

anxious about their unsettled mnemonical map of their own role in the Holocaust, which includes both the extensive local complicity in the genocide but also its major demographic consequences, which have turned once multicultural societies into overwhelmingly ethnically homogeneous ones. Greatly aided by European Union's own memory politics and legislation, post-communist states have attempted to resolve these insecurities by undergoing a radical revision of their respective Holocaust remembrance where the memory (and symbols and imagery) of the Holocaust become appropriated to represent crimes of communism. By rejecting the cosmopolitan European narrative of the Holocaust, post-communist states have also removed anti-fascist resistance from the core memory of the Holocaust, which has allowed for a revival and ideological normalisation of fascist ideological movements in the present.

Tal Dingott Alkopher is also concerned with post-communist states, but extends the scope by looking at three socio-psychological reactions within the EU to the Arab Spring's refugee crisis, ranging from regaining ontological security, to security management, to de-securitisation, as important for the European security community. The first reaction of EU member states to immigration-related uncertainty, ascribed especially to the "Visegrad Four", is to "securitise-the-self" in the face of anxiety and ontological insecurity through the reaffirmation of national biographical narratives as well as national immigration policies at the expense of supranational European policies. The second reaction, illustrated by the European Commission's response to the crisis, is that of "managing securitisation" in response to a decline in ontological security resulting from the challenge posed by illegal immigration to the EU's image of semi-sovereign entity (i.e. to its role as the gatekeeper of the Schengen zone/borders, to its collective identity of an "order provider") as well as to its trust structures of multilateralism and solidarity. The third reaction corresponds to the logic of "empathy" and "de-securitisation", and is best illustrated by Germany's "open door" policy that was enabled by a psychological situation of a lack of perceived threat vis-à-vis the "immigrant-other", as well as a "civilian power" collective identity (Dingott Alkopher 2018).

Christopher S. Browning moves the analysis to one member state and addresses the anxieties of the "remainers" in the Brexit referendum and the consequences of its failure to address the ontological anxieties and insecurities of Remain voters. Drawing on the insights of the literature on ontological security, *Browning's* contribution explores how the Brexit Referendum on whether or not the UK should leave the European Union has been a source of destabilisation, dread and ontological anxiety. Focussing mainly on British citizens who voted or self-identified as in the Remain camp and on EU foreign nationals resident in the UK, Browning (2018b) shows how existential anxieties have had slightly different points of focus for different groups of people. In response, the article also discusses how, confronted with such destabilising anxieties, people have adopted different mechanisms in order to reassert a sense of order and certitude often viewed as central to preserving ontological security. The ways in which this has been done raise a number of important questions in relation to issues of sovereignty, resistance, home, and Britain's place in the world.

Elke Krahmann is similarly concerned with the societal level and analyses how private security firms contribute to and benefit from ontological insecurity in the EU, arguing in favour of a collective security community that resists the individualisation of ontological security and reasserts the public monopoly on violence. She argues that the EU appears

to have entered a period of crisis as citizens feel growing anxiety about new developments and risks, including internal and external migration, transnational crime and terrorism, economic disparity and fiscal uncertainty. Collective traumas caused by the terrorist attacks of Paris, Brussels, Berlin and Manchester, but also by radical economic transformations and austerity have led to a sense of ontological insecurity amongst many Europeans. The article examines how the private security industry in Europe contributes to and benefits from these developments. It observes that European security firms market ontological security through three mechanisms: risk identification, risk profiling and risk management. Risk identification lays the foundations for ontological (in)security through the construction of known, unknown and unknown-unknown risks. Risk profiling contributes to the creation of self-identities by assigning differential risks to specific individuals and life styles. Finally, risk management contains individual anxieties and provides ontological security by means of new security routines and habitual assurance. Common among these commercial risk management mechanisms are the individualisation and responsibilisation of European citizens for their own (ontological) security, thus responding to and reinforcing the perceived failure of the EU as a collective security community (Krahmann 2018).

Maria Mälksoo moves the analysis to the aggregate level and builds on IR applications of ontological security to propose an ontological security-inspired reading of the EU and NATO's engagement with hybrid threats. She illustrates how NATO and the EU's respective countering of hybrid threats collapses their daily security struggles into ontological security management exercise. This has major consequences for defining the contents of an Article 5 attack and the related response for NATO, and the maintenance of a particular symbolic order and identity narrative for the EU. The institutionalisation of hybrid threat counteraction emerges as a routinisation strategy to cope with the "known unknowns". Such institutionalisation attempts of ontological security seeking point at the problematic prospect of further compromising the fuzzy distinction between politics and war, as the logic of hybrid conflicts presumes that all politics could be reduced to a potential build-up phase for a full-blown confrontation (Mälksoo 2018).

Jennifer Mitzen concludes by arguing how the EU has become an anxious community where its long peace may be a symptom rather than a solution for European security, with a particular emphasis on how this has become manifest in the migration crisis. She addresses this emergence of an anxious community through an ontological security lens, highlighting the role of (auto)biographical narratives and quotidian routines in sustaining one's sense of self or subjectivity and capacity for action. Applied in this case, an ontological security lens draws attention to the fact that while the EU takes a novel hybrid institutional shape, the cultural field in which its politics are practiced remains stunted and has not adapted to the new political form. Instead, EU governance practices de-legitimate political disagreement while the cultural repertoire in security affairs consists of primitive modes of political reaction: especially that of othering. An adaptive policy response to migration would be to de-securitize it and link it to EU values and institutions. But, as *Mitzen* argues, de-securitisation amounts to politicisation, and the EU lacks mechanisms for handling political disagreement. In sum, mutually reinforcing logics keep the human dimension of migration out of EU political sphere. The rigid boundaries are at a cultural level not an individual level, making it hard for post-national creativity to be articulated or recognised. The danger of this ongoing anxious community, a perpetuating ontological insecurity, is a de-legitimation of the EU's normative power (Mitzen 2018).

The special issue brings together a group of scholars who are able to apply ontological security to the study of the EU. These eight contributions can be viewed in terms of their relationships to (i) the field of psychology, sociology, and political psychology/IR. In particular, Della Sala, Browning and Krahmann's articles draw on narratives, discourses and practices in social science to understand the underlying anxieties of ontological insecurity, while Rumelili, Subotic, Dingott Alkopher, Mälksoo and Mitzen focus mainly on the level of the state or the EU as a whole, drawing on political and IR related analyses.

The articles also overlap and divide in terms of (ii) their dominant empirical focus on the EU, states or groups where Browning and Krahmann combine a focus on societal groups and the EU, while Rumelili, Subotic and Dingott Alkopher put emphasis on both particular EU member states and the EU. Rumelili and Subotic share with Della Sala a specific interest in how the role of memory shapes and constructs ontological insecurities and securities, even if Della Sala's analysis, similar to Mitzen's, remain largely at the EU level. Here Mitzen's turn towards the EU as an anxious community has in common a number of underlying normative and ethical concerns underlined by *Mälksoo* in her discussion of the EU and NATO.

In relation to (iii) spatial focus, there is a general blurring between the inside/outside dimension in all articles, although Rumelili, Subotic and Krahmann mainly emphasise insecurity within the EU, while Author Della Sala, Dingott Alkopher and Browning tend to move across the EU's borders in their focus on the interaction between the inside and the outside. In comparison, Mälksoo and Mitzen are more concerned with the EU and NATO in global politics and how anxious politics and ontological insecurities have ethical implications.

Conclusion: understanding ontological (in)security in the European Union

This introduction to the special issue has set out the argument for why the concept of ontological security is needed to understand contemporary fears and anxieties amongst Europeans, and the consequences of this approach for European security. It represents a unique theoretical and empirical contribution to both the study of security in Europe and the study of the EU as a security provider in a global context. The focus on ontological security provides a major theoretical and methodological innovation to the study of security in Europe due to its carefully chosen studies of ontological security within the EU, with a specific focus on contemporary crises, such as refugee challenges, Brexit and the anxieties of the "remainers", and the ways in which private security companies benefit from a crisis narrative. In this regard, a focus on ontological (in)security in the EU represents a new and original perspective from which to analyse the EU as a European security provider. In particular, as discussed in the last two concluding articles, the ontological security perspective provides a highly-relevant means of examining the success and failure of the EU as a peace project and form of conflict resolution, as well as one of the longest-lasting security communities. The special issue is thus likely to stimulate both theoretical debates about the meaning of European security and policy debates about responses to the security challenges of the high levels of fear and anxiety across Europe. At the same time, it raises the level of theoretical and policy debate by advocating that questions of ontological (in)security in the EU become a centre point for understanding contemporary European security.

As this introduction to the special issue has set out, an ontological security approach brings a number of innovations to the study of the EU, as demonstrated by the eight contributions. The first innovation is the way in which the ontological security approach explicitly analyses social, economic and political issues at the same time by focusing on the interrelationships between social wellbeing, economic prospects, and political challenges. In this way the ontological security approach helps address the weakness in EU studies, which thus far separately studies economic issues at the EU level, political relationships between member states, and social welfare issues primarily within member states. This leads to the second innovation of the ontological security approach, which insists on studying security at all three levels – EU, member state, and social group – at the same time and in the same space. This ensures that widespread concerns identified in this introduction, including personal socioeconomic fears and anxieties of unemployment, Eurozone economic fears, terrorism fears in the UK and France, and immigration concerns across the EU, are all analysed in an integrated way. In turn, this combination of fields and levels of analysis leads to the third innovation of the ontological security approach for EU studies, which provides a psychosocial understanding of the roots of populism across the EU. In this respect ontological security research provides a more holistic approach to understanding populist politics through its combined focus on macro and micro politics, and its ability to combine instrumental and affective approaches to identity and security.

At the same time, this introduction and special issue also have a number of lessons for ontological security approaches from studying the EU. The first lesson from analysing ontological security in the EU is that the analytical frame must always include the inter-personal/group, state, and inter-state levels of analysis. The contributors demonstrate how there is always a general blurring between inside/outside groups, states, and the EU in their articles. The necessity of studying the group-/state-/union-making discourses and narratives, practices and routines, remembrances and memories must penetrate within and beyond state-centric research strategies in ontological security research, as the authors show. The second lesson from EU studies is that both exogenous-intersubjective and endogenous-intrasubjective notions of self and self-making are constantly present and must be analysed in flux. Thus social groups within and without member states are equally important as member states within and without the EU, and the two are deeply interdependent. For example, the presence of member state "nationals" in other member states complicates state and far-right presentations of pure "nationality", especially in multinational member states such as the UK, France, Spain, or Belgium. This is equally true of the refugee challenge to the EU, with many member states such as Germany and Sweden having histories of welcoming asylum seekers and refugees. Yet most member states have communities of mixed "national" heritage because of post-colonial history and the implosion of empires in western Europe and the former Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Soviet empires.

These lessons of levels and notions of self-making lead to the third lesson of EU studies – that no-one is an island of ontological (in)security. As the contributions to the special issue attest, international issues such as European integration, global issues such as financial instability and precarious refugees, as well as planetary issues such as agricultural failure and climate change, all densely interweave collective unconscious processes and identity-making notions of self and other. In other words, the EU experience of economic,

social and political processes of mutual accommodation and inclusion by European states and peoples encompasses the generation and addressing of ontological (in)security within and between the EU and its member societies in ways that speak loudly about global politics more broadly.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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